

[J. D. Mashburn]

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J. D. Mashburn (white)

11 Southside Ave.,

Asheville, N. C.

Owner of tire shop

Douglas Carter, writer

EX-SOLDIER Original Names Changed Names

J. D. Mashburn Don Washburn C9 N.C. Box 1

EX-SOLDIER

"We didn't like being sent to a war that was already over, but there was nothing we could do about it - we had to go. Some of the boys talked recklessly about deserting, but nobody tried it. We were really mad, though, when we learned that what they called fighting units had been taken off the ships and mustered out while we were on our way to France.

"Our outfit had been sent to Camp Mills, Long Island, to wait for sailing orders, and we were there when the false alarm came about the end of the war. No one was allowed any leave, and suddenly on the night of November 10, 1918, we were ordered to Hoboken, N. J., and we embarked immediately on the Adriatic. Before daylight we heard a rumor that the sailing had been postponed, or cancelled, and then we heard about the Armistice. We didn't pay much attention at first, because it had only 2 been a few days since the

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'false armistice', and we weren't going to be sucked in again. You can bet we were tickled, though, when it finally seemed that this one was the real thing! We could just see ourselves going home! But after a day at the dock - what do you suppose? - they sent us to France! We were a disgusted bunch, going over. Took us 14 days to reach Liverpool - we had a full convoy."

Don Washburn is talking. He operates a tire shop here, and is an ardent American Legionnaire. He was born in an adjoining mountain county on June 29, 1893, the first of four children. The other three were girls. His ancestors had emigrated from England and Scotland and settled there in the early part of the 18th century. They were all farmers, and Don's early life was spent on a small farm. He attended the country school, and later a denominational junior college in the mountains. He left schools however, and went to Colorado "to seek his fortune." He had an aunt there, and an uncle, and lived for a time with the former. He tried everything possible, including mining, ranching, and clerking. He was never long in one place. "For 10 years, from 1912 to 1921, I was in a different State on New Year's Day, except 1919, when I was in France." He was about to decide on mining as a career when he was drafted. It was July 5, 1918, when he entered the Army, 3 and he was first sent to Fort Oglethorpe, Ga. Having been placed in a medical unit, he was transferred to the hospital at Camp McClellan, Anniston, Ala.

"It was called a 1,200-bed hospital, but during the flu epidemic we had more than 4,000 patients, on an average. We worked like dogs from about seven in the morning until the last patient of the day had been checked in or out - usually about 10 o'clock that night. The men died like flies, and several times we ran out of boxes to bury them in, and had to put their bodies in cold storage until more boxes were shipped in. It was horrible."

"Did you get the flu?"

"No. They sprayed us two or three times a day with something, and very few of us in the hospital unit got sick."

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After about three months in Alabama, the unit was sent to New York, en route to France. Having arrived in Liverpool, the company went to an overnight camp near Birmingham.

"We were already sore at the whole world, and when we reached the tents assigned us, there weren't even any cots to sleep on. We had to roll up in our blankets on the ground."

"Don, the boys in the trenches had a tough time, too," I said.

He replied, emphatically, "But the blasted war was over, and had been for two weeks. We should have been in the 4 States! The next night, at Le Havre, France, it was the same thing: no beds, no cots. And the next four days and nights we spent in those half-pint freight cars that are supposed to be big enough for eight horses or 40 men. At the end of four days we were only about 200 miles from Le Havre. Finally, though, we got off of the train, and my squad was quartered in a barn loft, full of hay. We were fairly comfortable there, although we had no stove. There was no coal or wood to burn, anyhow; but the Army furnished us with plenty of clean straw and hay, and when we got too cold we could crowd into one of the small cafes in the town, which was close by.

"Each house there had a pile of manure in the front yard, and a man's standing in the community depended on how big his pile was. The mayor had the largest pile.

"For many weeks we had nothing to do but play cards and try to keep warm. They had us drill a few times, though. By that time my outfit was known as Evacuation Hospital Company No. 32. Then one day we were ordered out in full equipment, and all sorts of rumors flew around: we were going home; we were going to Germany; we were going to Paris; we were going here, and there, and everywhere. Actually, however, we marched about half a mile to Base Hospital No. 13, to relieve an outfit that had been ordered back to the States! We had real beds and better food, then, 5 and could keep warm without half trying. Best of all, we had work to do, and time began to pass faster - or so it seemed.

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"Spring came, and then summer, and in no time at all we were back in New York. Still a private, I got my honorable discharge at Camp Lee, Va., on July 26, 1919, and went straight home. I hadn't seen my folks for years - I was in the West when I went in the Army, and hadn't been home since I left for Colorado. It was sure good to be back in these mountains again. My father had done well, too, and had money in the bank.

"Since I was a boy I had always wanted a business of my own, and once in Colorado I had a small refreshment stand, but it didn't pay, and I lost it. When I got back from the Army I looked around for something, and worked for a short while in the tannery near home, but I wanted to get into a business that I could own someday. I didn't find anything around here, however, so I headed for the West again. I made some money in Kansas, shucking corn, and saved most of it - there wasn't anywhere to spend it. We worked six full days a week, and got \$5 a day besides our room, board, and laundry. The only expense was clothes: we wore out two pairs of canvas gloves a day, and one pair of overalls a week. They didn't cost much, though, and I got quite a bit ahead. We would go to the little town every Saturday 6 night, but they didn't have any amusements there, and we usually went back to the farm after an hour or so.

"That winter I heard about the good wages being paid in Akron, Ohio, at the rubber plants, and I got a job at one of the largest factories there. I applied one day and went to work the next morning, at \$1 an hour. We worked 10 hours in my department. Later, after moving to another department, I got \$1.50 an hour, and put in eight hours a day.

"I learned the tire business from one end to the other, and saved all the money I could. I always went to the night classes at the plant, where they taught different things about tires and rubber, and I met a man there from Pennsylvania, named Myers, who had a little money, and who wanted to go in business. We seemed to hit it off pretty well together, and decided to go in partnership.

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"We considered several places in West Virginia, but couldn't find just what we wanted. About that time I took a trip home, and it seemed to me that there was an opening here for the kind of shop we had in mind. I sent for Myers, and he agreed with me, so we opened a tire-repair shop together on Stroup St., just two blocks from where I am now. That was in 1921.

"The shop didn't pay very well until we took on a line of well-known tires to sell, and about that time Myers got tired of it, and offered to sell out. I got my father to endorse a note for me, and took over the entire business.

"Myers didn't last but about a year. His whole attitude was wrong: when a man came to our place Myers would try to get all he could out of him right then and there, and deal with him as if we'd never see him again. That ain't the way to build up a business. You've got to have satisfied customers, and bring them back for more business. Besides, a man that you've treated right, and been fair with, will tell his friends, and they'll come around for something. Myers didn't know anything about building up a business that way, and he lost customers almost as fast as I could get them. And he didn't know how to get along with these people here - he was from the North, and I suppose the people where he came from are different from us down here. Why, whenever he met a man on the street who owed us a little money, he would stop him and say, 'How about paying that 50¢ you owe us for that tire?' Folks down here get tired of that mighty quick. It's a good thing for me that he decided to pull out. I've been running the business for nearly 17 years, now, and I've done very well. I own my home, clear, and there's nothing against the business. I have five men working for me, and I may have to put on another man soon. I always try to give my customers a little more for their money than they expect, and it pays."

Don is about six feet tall, weighs 180, is about to protrude at the waistline, and walks slightly stooped. His gait is still that of the mountaineer. He married in 1923, and his wife, who continued to work for several years after their marriage says that she is "in the baby business now." They have three children: a girl, 11, and two boys, four and one. She was

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formerly employed across the street from Don's shop, and one day he got her to bind up a cut finger. He had noticed her for some time, but could not get an introduction. They have a bungalow in one of the better residential sections, and the yard is carefully fenced to keep the children out of the street. A tiny Boston puppy is the newest member of the household, and they have a hard time keeping the baby from squeezing the animal to death, he loves it so.

For recreation, Don bowls in the winter, and fishes in the summer. Whenever possible, he goes to the coast for salt-water fishing, and has become very adept. He belongs belongs to the Y.M.C.A., the chamber [Chamber?] of commerce [Commerce?] , and a fraternal order, and is a deacon in the Presbyterian church, but the American Legion is really his extramarital extra-marital love: he never misses a meeting or a parade, is prompt with his dues, serves on nearly all committees, does Herculean work, and always has a spotless uniform. He is very nearly the Perfect Member.

“What do you think about war, Don?”

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“There ought not to be any. Well, unless somebody invades your country. Then you've got to fight.”

“What about China, and Spain, and Ethiopia?”

“They're just darn fools in Spain. Whichever side wins, they all lose. They're fools for letting Hitler and Mussolini and the Russians ruin their country. I'll bet most of them have forgotten what they started fighting for. China and Ethiopia are different, and there ought to be some way to keep strong nations from invading weak nations, but not by war, except I don't blame the weak nation for fighting. The League of Nations was supposed to handle things like that, I thought, but it turned out to be a flop. Let 'em fight, though, if they have

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to, so long as we can keep out of it. I didn't even get to the World War until after it was over, but there wasn't anything about it I enjoyed, except getting back home.”